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ABSTRACT

Noting that the number of grandparent-led families is increasing in the United States and that raising one's grandchildren can and should be a positive experience, this book is designed as a handbook for both grandparents and the professionals who advise them. Chapter 1, "Parenting Again," provides a checklist for the parenting grandparent related to adapting to their new role and responsibilities. Chapter 2, "Can I Do This?" encourages grandparents to examine their style of parenting and their feelings about parenting again, and discusses the role of age in parenting, the impact of parenting on one's marriage, and other adjustment issues. Chapter 3, "Parenting Two Generations of Kids," concerns helping grandchildren to adjust to the new family situation, relating to adult children, and dealing with children's feelings about the "loss" of their parents. Chapter 4, "Parenting Again: Different than Before," highlights the importance of having a positive attitude, communicating with other family members, relying on one's experience, protecting the grandchildren, and dealing with common behavioral and learning problems. Chapter 5, "It's Expensive," describes the cost of raising a child and provides information on applying for public and private financial assistance. Chapter 6, "Legal Issues," describes grandparents' legal rights and defines basic legal relationships. Chapter 7, "Making a Choice," concerns the decision to parent or not parent one's grandchildren and provides resources to help grandparents make that decision. Chapter 8, "Where To Find Help," completes the book with a list of organizational, information, and Internet resources for grandparents raising their grandchildren. Each chapter contains references or resources for additional information. (KB)

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# and parents

## raising our children's children

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grand
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# grand parents

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doris k. williams

University of Idaho

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***to my grandchildren***

◆

*Geoffrey Todd Williams*
Troy, Idaho

*Robert Mitchell Williams*
Worthington, Ohio

*Tori Ann Williams*
Troy, Idaho

*Warren Thomas Williams*
Troy, Idaho

◆

# table of contents

**1: parenting again 1**
You Have Kids Again: The Initial Shock

**2: can I do this? 5**
What Kind of Parent Was I the First Time?
How Do I Really Feel About Parenting Again?
Am I Too Old for This?
What Will Happen to My Marriage?
Is Being Angry and Confused Normal?
What About My Job?
Can I Still Have Some Privacy?
I'm Different Than My Friends Now
Am I Physically Up to This?

**3: parenting two generations of kids 13**
Where's Mommy? What to Tell the Grandchildren
Relating to Adult Children
When Parents Visit, Or Don't
How Kids Feel About "Losing" Their Parents
Sample Contract

**4: parenting again: different than before 21**
Be Positive
Let's Talk, and Talk and Talk and Talk
Working with the Rest of the Clan
Been There; Done That: the Advantages of Experience
Protecting the Grandchildren
Getting Medical Coverage for the Grandchildren

What About Schooling?
Making Room for the Grandchildren
Should I Spank?
Common Behavioral and Learning Problems

**5: it's expensive 33**
The Cost of Raising a Child Today
Public and Private Financial Assistance
How to Apply for Benefits
Where Else Can I Look for Support?

**6: legal issues 41**
What Are My Legal Rights?
What Is a Legal Relationship?
Document, Document, Document, To Win Custody

**7: making a choice 47**
Saying "No" to Parenting Again
Saying "Yes" to Parenting Again

**8: where to find help 51**
Agencies & Organizations
Information Sources
Internet Resources

# 1: parenting again

*"Raising your grandchildren is a lot different than raising your own kids. We hadn't had children in our home for years. Suddenly they were there 24 hours a day. The meaning of the word 'grand' has changed for both generations. It's like starting over again, but I see only opportunity in the task."*

### You Have Kids Again: The Initial Shock

When you have your grandkids full time, grand-parenting is a little less grand and a lot more parenting. But if you can take on the job of parenting your grandchildren with a sense of hope and a willingness to work toward becoming a family, there is much "opportunity in the task."

When your grandchildren come to you because your own children, their parents, have failed, they don't come empty handed. They bring anger, shame, confusion, fear, and feelings of loss with them. You probably meet them at the door with many of the same feelings. That's a lot of emotional baggage, and it has to be dealt with. If you don't work through those feelings, they can become an unbearable load to carry.

You love your grandchildren, but you did not expect to raise them. Sometimes you inherit grandchildren because of a parent's death or divorce, but usually because your own child can't or won't function as a parent.

If you have custody of the grandchildren, you will have to work through the feelings of shame and regret brought on by your adult children's

failure as parents, and wrestle with your own guilt over where you went wrong, even if you were a good parent the first time around. You have to deal with the not very pleasant emotions of the grandchildren. You have to learn how to work with your own, often troubled, adult children. And if you were not a good parent, you will have to learn how to parent, and make a commitment to parenting well. After coming to grips with all these emotional issues, you must then come up with a plan for parenting again.

A checklist for the parenting grandparent would include:

- assessing your abilities–financially, emotionally and physically–to provide care
- deciding to take on the responsibility
- learning to get along
- adapting to your new role
- accepting your adult child's failure as a parent
- learning how to parent grandchildren
- knowing and meeting your grandchildren's basic and special needs
- getting financial help
- getting legal help.

Grandparents have been raising grandchildren since time began, but never before have so many grandparents begun parenting again. At last count, more than 3.5 million children in the U.S. were growing up in homes headed by a grandparent. You are not alone.

Grandparents raising grandchildren is called "skip-generation" parenting. Skip-generation parenting is on the rise in all ethnic groups and income levels across the country. It is not a white problem or a black problem or a brown problem. It's a national problem.

There is no way to overstate the importance of family. In a family we learn who we are and how to treat each other. When kids grow up and leave the family, they should have all the skills they need to become productive citizens. If you are raising a second family, remember that you're doing an important job. You make a difference.

***Why are the number of grandparent-led families growing?***

1. Every year, nearly a million kids join the ranks of children-of-divorced parents. When parents remarry other parents, the resulting "blended families" do not always blend.

2. Teen pregnancy rates are high. Almost one million babies are born to teens in the United States every year. In some states, grandparents are legally responsible for grandchildren born to their children under the age of 18.

3. The prison population has exploded. Almost 80 percent of inmates are parents of dependent children (children under the age of 18).

4. In the United States, reports of child abuse and neglect are up 300 percent since 1976. Under these circumstances, courts may take the children away or parents may abandon them.

5. More men and women are involved with crime and drugs. Drug addiction is passed on to more than 375,000 babies every year.

6. AIDS is creating an orphaned population. By the year 2000 nearly 124,000 children a year will have lost a parent to this disease. AIDS is also passed on to these children.

Raising your grandchildren can and should be a positive experience. Children raised by grandparents can fare as well in life as those raised by biological parents. And grandparents raising children are apt to live fuller, more active lives.

The basic *opportunity in the task* of parenting again is to give love and receive it; to nurture others, and grow as individuals as we do so. It is the most important, complex, and rewarding exchange human beings engage in. While it is not a responsibility to be taken lightly, it is undeniably a source of many of life's lighter moments.

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# 2: can I do this?

### What Kind of Parent Was I the First Time?

When your adult child fails as a parent, you may feel partly responsible. It is impossible to know exactly how much you have influenced your adult child's parenting style. But by definition, as adults, your adult children are responsible for their own actions.

The environment influences children. Home life, school experiences, modern culture, friendships, and even television have all helped shape your adult child. Genetics also influence personality.

Ask yourself what kind of environment you provided at home. Was it a permissive household, where your child did not learn to take responsibility? A violent household, where physical punishment was too frequent or severe? A household in which drinking or drug addiction was a problem? If so, it is important that you recognize the problem and make a commitment not to repeat these patterns with your grandchildren. You can change the way you parent.

Good parents can and do raise children who fail as parents themselves. Your grown children are responsible for their choices. Drug abuse, bad marriages, and unplanned pregnancies are not choices parents can make for their children, and these choices strongly impact how they parent.

It is important, however, to take a hard look at your own parenting skills before taking on the responsibilities of parenting again. Every parent makes mistakes and has regrets, but if you feel you have failed as a parent, you should get counseling. Take parenting classes. Read books on

how to parent and grandparent. You can change the way you parent. If you were lacking basic skills the first time, and feel you can't improve your parenting style, you should decide not to parent again.

If you were a good parent the first time around, work at letting yourself off the hook for your grown children's behavior. Your influence may have been positive, but it was not the only factor shaping their lives and their choices.

### How Do I Really Feel About Parenting Again?

You may be feeling anger, fear, sadness, and many other emotions as you face the decision to parent again. You cannot ignore how you feel or how the grandchildren feel. Such emotional issues are among the first you have to face when deciding whether to parent your grandchildren. Sorting out your feelings will take a long time, even after the decision is made.

Parenting is a challenge, even the first time around. If an adult child dies, grandparents have their own grief, loss, and sadness, as well as the feelings of their orphaned grandchildren, to work through. Other types of child abandonment can be just as devastating.

Grandchildren that come from families that don't function well are often needy, angry, and hurt. Their feelings, and how to deal with them, must be taken into account as you make your decision to parent again. If your grandparent-led family has emerged from a crisis situation, counseling for both the children and yourself could be helpful. Medicaid covers the cost of therapy. Some private therapists accept a limited number of patients who pay on a sliding scale, according to their income and need. If you are a low-income family in need of a counselor, contact you local welfare office and ask for a referral.

### Am I Too Old for This?

*"My grandson feels that I am old-fashioned and not 'with it'."*

No matter what their age, children always need to test, play, and explore in order to learn. To learn, kids also need to be actively and gently

directed by their caregiver. As we get older, giving kids what they need to learn can become a challenge.

As we age and lose some of our physical stamina and mental sharpness, we try to regain a sense of control by becoming more rigid in our routines and in what we expect from others. "Rigid" is not a quality that is useful when parenting active children or rebellious teenagers. The truth is, the younger the grandparent, the more likely they are to be able to provide full-time care for grandchildren.

Keep in mind that youth is defined not just by age, but by attitude. If you're an active, healthy, happy person, you're more likely to succeed as a second-time parent, no matter what your age. It's not important, or even appropriate, to be cool or "with it." It is vital to be loving, patient, and dependable. That is "being there" for the grandchildren.

## What Will Happen to My Marriage?

*"We [my husband and I] do things together that we never did before. He never participated in raising our children. He never had time to be a parent, and I asked him if he missed that and he said 'no,' and then he said, 'I have time this time to be involved, and I like it.' And I thought, wow! ... We are sharing. We are doing together what I did before."*

Raising grandchildren can make a marriage more fun and lively, but the stresses of raising a second family can also break up a marriage. If your marriage is getting shaky, and the list of ideas below doesn't help, find a marriage counselor to help you talk through your feelings. A marriage will be more likely to survive if the partners try to:

- talk to each other
- talk to other grandparents who are parenting again
- set aside some time for yourselves as a couple
- show a united front to the grandchildren
- show a united front to your children
- keep a sense of humor

- give each other some time off to do what you enjoy
- share the new grandparenting responsibility

## Is Being Angry and Confused Normal?

*"I looked forward to the time when all my kids were gone. I wanted to be able to find myself as a person, not as a mother or a grandmother. I miss all the things I thought I would be able to do with my husband. My life has turned upside down. I am no longer a young parent with boundless energy, and my own children are my worst enemies."*

Resentment isn't pretty, but it's pretty normal. Most grandparents have worked hard all their lives and have looked forward to retirement. Many have saved to be able to enjoy some time alone or as a couple. It's natural to feel resentment when a future you have worked for all your life is suddenly and dramatically changed. How your feelings will affect the job you do as a parent, and whether resentment can be overcome, are questions you need to answer before deciding to parent again.

## What About My Job?

Resentment can grow if you give up your job for the sake of your grandchildren. Many grandparents who are young enough to parent again are still working. Working grandparents are saving for retirement, trying to make ends meet, or simply enjoying their jobs. Choosing to raise your grandchildren can mean working longer hours to help support them, or shorter hours to be home for them. Like most parents, you'll probably feel you need to do both.

Working grandparents will have to find childcare for young children, and may need "respite care" (childcare for occasional, brief periods) for older children. Childcare and respite care cost money, but can give children another safe haven outside the grandparents' home. Caregivers also provide grandparents relief from the demands of parenting, allow them to keep working, and give them a group of experienced professionals to talk to about parenting. It's also a good way for your grandchildren to make new friends.

It's important to think about your own needs, as well as the children's needs, when making job-related decisions. If possible, discuss your new home life with your employer. A temporary schedule change may give you time to figure out what adjustments you need to make. Your local welfare office may provide free or reasonably priced childcare or be able to make a referral.

## Can I Still Have Some Privacy?

*"[Privacy] was nonexistent, but now it's getting better because our grandchild is getting older. When she was little, we couldn't leave her alone for anything."*

Your space will be invaded by a child, especially one that is too young to understand the notion of privacy. Making a schedule for childcare or respite care can allow grandparents to steal some moments alone, and to plan on how best to use private time. On the other hand, older children can feel their space is being invaded by the actions (or the presence) of grandparents.

If the grandchildren are old enough to discuss the issue, talk about what you need and what the kids need. This is an important first step to resolving the problem. Discussion is the first step to solving most problems.

Too much privacy can feel a lot like loneliness. Losing some privacy can be a pretty good trade off for the fun kids bring. Don't rewrite history when you think of the privacy and other things you've lost by taking on the grandchildren. But giving up too much of what you enjoy, even for those you love, can make you angry and resentful. Try to strike a balance that you can live with.

If you need private time, schedule childcare so you can get away. Choose your caregivers thoughtfully, and don't feel guilty.

## I'm Different Than My Friends Now

*"There are people you don't see as much because you're not able to do things with them. But then you're available to do things with other neighbors with small children that you wouldn't have done anything with before. Now I get invited to children's birthday parties!"*

There are literally millions of grandparents out there going through the same things you are. Get connected: Talk to other grandparents you see dropping kids off at school. Find others who share your experience as a skip-generation parent so you won't be isolated. Your welfare office or school may be able to connect you with local grandparent support groups or refer you to someone who can.

Being isolated from friends is not a healthy way to live. But change, in your social life, your friendships, and your interests, can be healthy. Change always brings new opportunities.

There's a modern version of an old adage that says, "No good deed shall go unpunished." This rings true when friends criticize grandparents for taking on the job of child rearing. It's important to find friends who share your experience as a primary caregiver and support you in that role. You can swap stories, share your joys as well as your fears; find some moral support, and exchange practical coping strategies with other custodial grandparents.

### Am I Physically Up to This?

In addition to deciding to raise your grandkids, you also have to be physically able to do it. As a grandparent who is parenting, many people depend on you. It's important to take care of yourself for them, and for you.

Raising children is a demanding job. You should get regular rest, eat right, and find some time for yourself. Regular exercise can give you more energy and also helps fight off depression. If you've got your health, all you need is limitless patience, infinite amounts of love, uncommon common sense, optimism, great organizational skills, and many other personal strengths to be a good parent. Managing stress through exercise, and by scheduling time for hobbies and friends, can also help keep grandparents from getting cranky or abusive.

Grandparents have traditionally adjusted to aging by tackling fewer tasks. With children around, more has to get done, not less. Rest time is a fantasy at worst, or a lucky break at best, unless you plan for it by scheduling respite care or regular periods of long-term childcare.

Older grandparents' lower energy levels, higher likelihood of illnesses, and need for a more rigid schedule raises questions about how they might

parent. But some energy comes from what you believe about yourself and what you know you can do. There are a few ways you can "turn back the clock," to feel younger and act younger, including:

- believing that you are youthful
- having enough money to hire help
- being willing to spend money, and time, on the grandchildren
- having enough space in the home for kids
- living in a neighborhood where other children live
- living in a neighborhood near schools, churches, hospitals, and other community resources
- participating in children's school, sport, and church activities.

When scientists look at what kind of grandparent succeeds at parenting the second time around, they find three consistent parenting skills: (1) successful second time parents are dependable and supportive; (2) they work toward keeping the entire family at peace; and (3) they give meaning to the family and its members by passing-on stories and facts about past generations. Grandparents who bring these strengths to the job of parenting again are likely to do the job well and enjoy it more.

**Sources for More Information—Can I Do This?**

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## Internet Information Sources

*The WonderWise Parent*
http://www.ksu.edu/wwparent

*Early Childhood Development*
http.//www.iamyourchild.org



20.

# 3: parenting two generations of kids

*"Everything should be made as simple as possible, but no simpler."*
—Albert Einstein

### Where's Mommy? What to Tell the Grandchildren

"Where's Mommy?" is a nightmare question. Grandparents have a hard time helping grandchildren understand why they aren't living with their own parents. Be gentle but truthful with children. Keep it simple. Give them the news they can digest, but spare them the gruesome details.

Let children talk about their worries and their experiences. Don't be afraid of their emotional outbursts. They may already have more details than they can handle.

One grandparent reported that a grandchild, "wanted to climb inside the book" when it showed "mommy hugging the child and daddy making a hot apple pie in their cozy kitchen." Our society clings to the notion that every child has a mom and dad. The image of the nuclear family as "normal" is reinforced in books, on TV, by the children at school, and by teachers, doctors, and other adult authorities.

If this simple question hurts you to hear, keep in mind how having to ask it must feel to your grandchildren. If they are children of dysfunctional parents, your grandchildren may show signs of fear, doubt, and depression.

Don't add your own anger and sorrow to your grandchildren's already huge emotional load. Talk about their feelings. Let them know

your feelings when they ask, but keep it simple. Never demean their parents. Answer their questions thoughtfully. Talk about your own feelings with other adults who can offer you some insight and practical suggestions for coping.

It takes time for kids to adjust to grandparents as parents. There's a lot to get used to, including: adjusting to the loss of their own parents; trying to see these old folks as parents (You're probably having the same problem.); adjusting to their new home; and dealing with why they were rejected or abandoned by their parents.

Young children live in a literal world. They believe *exactly* what we say. The "humor" of sarcasm can blow right by little kids, but they can see the anger beneath it. Don't use sarcasm when you're talking to kids. If they want to talk, it is probably about something that is important to them.

When you talk to kids, give them simple explanations, even when you're trying to explain a complex family situation. Explanations to offer your grandchildren should include the following:

- Define family for the children. One child offered this nice definition: "A family is a group of people who love and take care of each other." Help children think about families in terms of what family members do for each other.
- The meaning of family is shown to children with actions more than words. Show love, respect, and patience, to the grandchildren and their parents. Require that love, respect, and patience be shown to everyone, including you.
- Encourage grandchildren to ask questions. For children to understand what might be a complicated family situation, they need to ask whatever questions they have, no matter how uncomfortable the questions make us.
- Recognize painful situations. Children may fear giving up family information. It is helpful for grandparents to respect the way the child controls personal information.
- Be patient. Only over time, and with the development of trust, will many children accept a relationship with adults.

- Encourage creativity. Help grandchildren describe their family. For example, ask grandchildren to draw a picture of the whole family. Ask them to tell about it, but do not criticize or judge the drawing. Drawings may give the grandparent a good idea about each child's view of the family: who stands next to whom, and if anyone is left out. The emotions of family members will come out in the pictures.
- Do your best not to pull your grandchildren into the emotional turmoil that often exists between grandparents and their own adult children (the grandchildren's parents).

## Relating to Adult Children

Unfortunately, adult children who cannot or will not parent often have underlying problems that their own parents cannot solve. These problems can include drug or alcohol addiction, violent or negligent behavior, and criminal activity.

At some point, however, you need to interact with your adult child. Acknowledging him or her as the parent of your grandchildren is important: Acknowledge your child as an adult by holding your adult child responsible for his or her behavior. If at all possible, work with your adult child so that he or she might eventually be able to parent the children. Help adult children establish whatever kind of nurturing relationship is possible for them with the grandchildren.

As an adult, you are responsible for your actions. Only you can change your behavior for the better. Regardless of past influences, your adult child is responsible for his or her own behavior too.

Rebuilding your relationship with your own children, and helping them establish healthy relationships with their children, is worth the (often tremendous) effort. Establishing family feeling between three generations is a worthwhile, long-term goal. But while grandparents attempt to reconnect their own children with the rest of the family, their first priority must be to protect the grandchildren's physical, emotional, and mental health, as well as their own.

Talk to your children about the financial and emotional support you expect them to provide their children. Make your expectations clear by

putting them in writing. If they want to visit the grandchildren, write out your expectation for the adult child's behavior during the visit. Many grandparents write contracts (see Sample Contract) with their adult children. These contracts are not legally binding, but they do clarify what you expect of your adult child and what he or she can expect of you.

Seek legal aid if you wish to draw up a legally binding contract stating visitation rights or giving you sole custody of your grandchildren. See the chapter on Legal Issues (page 41) for more information.

### When Parents Visit, Or Don't

It's likely that the parents of the grandchild will want to visit. If your grandchild's parent(s) pose a threat to the safety of the grandchildren, or if you're not sure of the value of a visit, call a case worker and talk about what is in the best interest of the grandchild, and about how to manage the situation.

When the parent visits, it may be wise to meet in a public place. That way, if the adult child does not show up, the grandchild will have other distractions and be less disappointed. The adult also will be less likely to behave badly in public.

Try to foresee the consequences of the visit. The grandchildren will probably have some reactions to the visit, or to a visit a parent promises, but doesn't deliver. Remind the children that they are safe and loved. Your kind words and patience are the best proof that this is true.

It's a challenge to always take the moral high road, but your patience and kindness must stretch wide enough to include the grandchildren's parents. Do not put down your grandchildren's parents in the presence of the grandkids. This will only cause more damage, and the grandchildren's shame and anger may end up being directed at you.

### How Kids Feel About "Losing" Their Parents

Even though they care about you, your grandchildren likely feel a strong sense of loss for their own parents, and may be self-conscious about being part of a family that is different. Dealing with the loss of one or both parents, along with the pressure to make a new relationship with

you, can be hard work for a kid. You are working through many of the same issues yourself, so you know how hard it is.

Recent research shows that children who have more than one reliable adult in their lives are more likely to succeed. It is best to try to work with the grandchildren's parents to make them a positive part of the grandchildren's lives. You can also find a mentor (adult role model) for your child if their parent is not a positive model, or is absent from their life. Some schools and YMCA/YWCAs have mentoring programs. Big Brothers and Big Sisters of America also offer kids a one-on-one relationship with a reliable adult. Both organizations have toll-free numbers you can call for more information.

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***Sample Contract***

**Joe Smith and his parents**

*the story:* Joe Smith's parents are raising two grandsons. Their son Joe is 30, widowed, and drug addicted. He is coming out of rehab again, and his parents want to give him one last chance for the sake of the grandchildren. This time they are using a contract, signed by him and witnessed by the family therapist.

*the contract:* The purpose of this contract is so we can all live peacefully together and know what our expectations are for each other.

For our son, Joe Smith, to continue to live with us and have contact with his sons, he must abide by the following rules.

1. He must get and remain clean and sober, and strive to lead a productive life. He must prove to his parents that he can be a good parent and provider for the children. He is not to socialize with his old friends from the street.

2. He must not give out his parents' home phone number or address except for on job applications. His parents will take all calls. He must use the phone only

with permission from his parents, or he will lose his phone privileges.

3. Curfew is 10:00 p.m. He must be home at that hour, or call if delayed. His parents will pick him up if he needs a ride home.

4. He must start an outpatient drug program immediately. He is expected to comply with any drug testing required by his parole officer.

5. He must begin a counseling/parenting program to help him establish a new relationship with his children.

6. Joe is expected to find a job in two months. He may not sleep in. He must be out looking for a job from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. and must provide his parents a list of employers he has contacted. Once he is employed, he must contribute to the support of his children by paying a share of the household expenses. This includes buying food and paying monthly bills.

7. Joe must share in household responsibilities. He must help prepare meals twice a week, and do dishes on other nights.

8. His parents will provide Joe food and shelter. They will give him a bus pass, but they will not give Joe any money. They will provide any necessary transportation.

9. Joe must not hurt his children with yelling or hitting. He may not take the children from the house without supervision.

10. Joe will spend at least 2 hours each day with his children. He must read to his children, play games with them, and help them with homework.

11. Joe must leave this house if any of the rules of this contract are broken.

*This is only a sample contract. Your own contract should reflect your situation and purpose. However, try to lay out the rules, expectations, and the consequences of violating the contract. As trust builds, you may wish to loosen up the rules, or rewrite the contract.*

*Signed*: Grandparent Grandparent

Adult child Witness

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# 4: parenting again: different than before

### Be Positive

Your attitude can keep you from seeing a problem clearly and choosing a reasonable solution. For example, if you think you're not a very good parent, you may try to make up for your (real or imagined) shortcomings by buying lots of presents, or allowing children too many freedoms. Or you might try to be a better parent by becoming so rigid that there is no room for honest mistakes, yours or theirs. Fortunately, you can adjust your attitude. You can become more effective, and more sure of yourself, if you try to:

- cooperate with the parent who shares responsibility for providing care
- monitor the grandchild's social, emotional, and academic development
- become aware of available services, obligations, and rights
- get relief from the demands of daily care giving
- learn to laugh, and savor all the joys of your new role

### Let's Talk, and Talk and Talk and Talk

Communication is the rock upon which all human relationships are built. Communication, the way we receive and send information, is extremely important to the grandparent/grandchild relationship. Good communication includes listening well, and saying what we mean. And we have to talk a lot. We have to talk about problems in order to make changes.

When you talk, present your ideas clearly. Avoid arguments. Talking with friends, clergy or other counselors can also help. Try to keep the lines of communication open with your adult children. And always talk to your grandkids.

When you listen, don't forget that non-verbal communication (what we say without words) needs to be considered. It sends a clear "message" for example, when you do not stop what you are doing to listen. That negative message is even stronger when you do not look at the person doing the talking. Relaxing, being open, and paying attention to what is being said lets people know that you are listening.

Children need to be taken seriously, no matter how weird or "out there" some of the things they care about may seem. They need to be "talked with" not "talked to" or "talked at." Give your grandchildren your attention. Comfort them when they're hurt or confused. Put yourself in the child's place. How would you like to be talked to? How would you like to be listened to?

Be sensitive and give children positive feedback when they talk. Achieving good communication is difficult but satisfying work. Don't give up. Sometimes children hear us even if they don't seem to be listening.

### Working with the Rest of the Clan

When grandparents begin parenting grandchildren, it is not unusual for them to hear from other adult children complaining that the children of the brother or sister who is having problems are being favored, or that the remaining grandchildren are being neglected.

If other children are still in your home, or if your adult children outside the home are upset, some practical hints for keeping the peace include:

- listen to them, and try to understand their feelings
- don't expect their help, but accept it if it's offered
- try family meetings to discuss ideas and needs
- remember the other grandchildren

If your adult children are willing to help you with the job of parenting, work out a plan with them that shows everybody what they will be expected to do (see Sample Contract p. 17). Kids benefit from having many caring adults in their lives. There's no such thing as too many good role models.

## Been There; Done That: The Advantage of Experience

Celebrate the fact that you're an experienced parent. There are many advantages to being older and parenting again. Parenting the first time around teaches you what works and what doesn't. You've also learned what the most important things in life are. You know not to sweat the small stuff. You've probably become more independent and outspoken. You probably have more time to be with and enjoy each of your grandchildren as individuals. These qualities can be real assets.

Remember your past successes and apply them to your new family. Times have changed, but human nature is still the same. Also try to use the experience of first-time parents who are raising kids your grandchildren's ages. Ask their opinions. They may be more aware than you of what life is like for kids today, what problems are common, and what works to correct bad behavior. Experience is a great teacher. Rely on your own experience and the experience of others.

## Protecting the Grandchildren

Most grandparents don't want to interfere in the lives of their adult children, but when the safety of the grandchildren is threatened, you must take action.

One set of grandparents reported that their son's neighbor called out of concern for the son's three children, ages 3, 5, and 10. The grandparents quickly went to the son's home and found his children alone, dirty, and without food. The grandparents were shocked at what they found. The children were removed and attempts were made to locate the son.

The son, father of the children, returned home the next day and went to the neighbors to inquire about the children. The neighbors told the father that they had called the grandparents because they were concerned

for the safety of the children. The children's father went to the home of his parents and was angry and hostile. Local police were called. The children were made wards of the court, and were placed in the grandparents' care. The father was found to be unable to care for the children. Unsafe or abusive situations like this are common reasons that grandchildren are removed from the parents and given over to the custody of grandparents.

The grandchildren's safety must be first priority. If they are threatened, protect them. Remove them from harm's way. Also protect yourself if an adult child is violent or criminally negligent. If you can't physically remove the children, contact the police and/or child protective services when children are in danger. Adult children have the distinct advantage of being adult; dependent children are dependent upon you.

### Getting Medical Coverage for the Grandchildren

Most medical insurance policies, including Medicare, will not cover your grandchildren. You must establish the proper legal relationship with your grandchildren (see chapter on Legal Issues, page 41), such as adoption, in order to qualify for coverage.

Contact your insurance company to find out what you can do to claim your grandchild as a dependent on your policy. Early Periodic Screening, Diagnosis, and Treatment (EPSDT) is one Medicaid program that offers screening, tests, treatments, and well baby visits. Medicaid and EPSDT are available to low-income families (for more information, see chapter on Benefits, page 33). State medical assistance is also available.

### What About Schooling?

You may need authorization from your grandchildren's parents, or from the court, to enroll your grandchildren in school. After you establish a legal relationship with the child, you will be able to participate in making decisions about the grandchildren's education. Your legal ability to make decisions on their behalf will vary with the legal status of your relationship.

Once your grandchild is enrolled, he or she may have some troubles adjusting at school. Make contact with school counselors and your grandchild's teachers. Inform them of your situation, and give them what-

ever information you can to help them to understand your grandchildren's behavior. If you can afford it, hire a private counselor or mental health care professional to help the children adjust.

### Making Room for the Grandchildren

Having some personal space allows us to stretch out, with our minds as well as our bodies. It's up to the grandparents to create the best possible living space for the grandchildren and for themselves.

How space in the home is used will depend on the ages of the children. Small children need less bedroom space but more room for play. As children grow older, they need more privacy. Do what is possible and most acceptable for all members of the household. Don't go crazy over what cannot be done.

It's important that your neighborhood is safe, as close to schools as possible, and has children in it who are close in age to your grandchildren. Grandchildren often feel comfortable in the home that their grandparents have lived in if they have been frequent visitors. It may give them a sense of security, comfort, and stability when they come to live with you.

The process of moving into a new home or reorganizing the space you have should begin with discussion. The family should talk not only about what each person needs, but also what each person is willing to live without.

### Should I Spank?

Corporal punishment, hurting a child's body (not to mention his mind), is no longer considered a productive form of discipline. It can be devastating to a child who has already lived with violence or negligence.

Many grandchildren who come to their grandparents are already at risk for social, academic, and emotional problems. These kids may need counseling to handle the affects of having lived with their dysfunctional parents. Spanking, hitting, and yelling can't help a child who is trying to cope with a painful past.

Using the natural consequences of a child's action can be effective discipline. Natural consequences include the loss of a privilege when a

corresponding responsibility isn't met. If you are unsure about how to use natural consequences or other forms of discipline, consult a child-development professional for the best way to handle discipline for kids who are at risk.

Make sure the child experiences the consequences of misbehavior immediately, and that these consequences are logical and appropriate to the deed that was done. Help the child learn to be responsible. Talk to them about what is expected and give choices, holding them responsible for the results of their choices. Assign reasonable, age-appropriate tasks or chores, and always choose your battles wisely. Ask the question, "What should the child learn from this experience and its consequences?"

## Common Behavioral and Learning Problems

Some children may be beyond your control. When this is the case, you may need help, and the child may need counseling or therapy. Some behaviors to look for in making decisions about your grandchild's need for therapy include: extreme fear or anger that does not diminish; playing with fire or setting fires; abusing others, himself, or animals; consistently bad grades, or other school problems.

Problems, and the age at which they are likely to occur, include:

- Kids often act out, or have behavior that is outside what is considered appropriate for their age. This might happen from very young ages through the teen years.
- Children can show fear when being separated from the grandparent. This is most common with younger children.
- Sleeping problems are common. For younger children, this may include an unwillingness to get to bed on time. For older children it might be poor sleep, bad dreams, or insomnia.
- Eating problems are also common. Both young children and teens tend to overeat, or, particularly for teens, they may "binge and purge" to control their weight. Depression may lead to a lack of interest in eating.

***To make life easier for the grandkids***

1. Keep a clear and regular daily routine
2. Make events predictable
3. Establish clear expectations
4. Having choices and making decisions gives any person a feeling of control, but be careful to give choices only when a choice is really possible. For example, the choice of what color of socks to wear is a decision for the kids to make, but if you want the child in bed by 9:00 p.m., do not offer a choice.
5. Setting limits for children makes life more predictable and helps them feel secure.

- Young children may act like babies again, talking baby talk, and messing or wetting their pants.
- Manipulative behavior can occur in children of all ages, but older kids will manipulate in ways that are different from younger kids. For example, a young child may cry to get help dressing. An older child may con you into giving him more money or getting out of responsibilities.
- Some grandkids will compare grandparents with their parents. Regardless of how they feel about their parent's behavior, they will continue to have an emotional attachment. Pitting parents against grandparents is no different than pitting one parent against another.

While these behaviors are not comfortable to watch, they are not uncommon in children with family histories of drug or alcohol addiction, neglect, or abuse, and can appear in children who have experienced none of those difficulties. But unacceptable behaviors are more likely when children have been abused, have experienced loss and uncertainty, or when their safety has been threatened.

Children who have suffered physical, mental, or sexual abuse need a professional counselor. Children who have been neglected also need to talk with a counselor. Counseling is available through your social worker or through child protective services. Professional mental health care in the private sector is expensive, but worth the investment if you can do it. Medicaid covers therapy if needed. If you are low-income family with a demonstrably great need for therapy, contact a local welfare office for a referral.

Grandchildren who come from painful situations carry their experiences with them. Sometimes they are depressed. Often they are angry. These are pretty normal reactions when we consider the road many of them travel to get to our doorstep.

Grandchildren who had rough early childhoods are at risk for learning disabilities. Don't try to diagnose and treat the child; use the list below only to identify possible symptoms. Read more about these problems at your local library, and consult a professional counselor if possible.

Talk to the school counselors and describe your grandchild's behavior. They may be able to identify the problem right away, and can refer you to books that teach you more about your grandchild's condition.

Learning disabilities are often invisible, but they pose a serious threat to a child's success. A few of the challenges you may look for include:

- **ADD (Attention Deficit Disorder)**: A child who seems unwilling to listen may actually be unable to listen. ADD or **ADHD** (Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder) kids need special help in learning how to focus in the classroom and outside it. A medical professional can tell you if your grandchild is ADD or ADHD, but teachers might also have insights.
- **Hyperactivity:** Is you grandchild a really active kid, or is he hyperactive? A medical professional can help you decide. Hyperactivity can be treated with diet, medication, and environmental changes.
- **Depression:** If the child is sad, uninterested in life, cruel to others or himself, he needs professional help. Depression can lead to suicide.

- **Anxiety:** If your grandchild has unfounded fears, he may suffer from general or specific anxieties. The child may avoid situations that are fearful (like going to sleep, making friends, and taking tests). He or she may be failing in school due to specific fears, like math anxiety. Most anxieties can be overcome with the help of a professional.
- **Fetal Alcohol Syndrome:** If your grandchild's mother drank while he was in the womb, he may have problems that are both physical and emotional. Other addictions can also bring on learning challenges. Have kids of addicted parents tested for possible challenges.

If you think your grandchild may have special needs or challenges, don't wait too long. Talk with teachers, the principal, the special education coordinator, and the counselor. If there is a serious problem, the earlier you deal with it, the better chance a grandchild has to overcome it. Talk to your grandchildren, and listen to them. All children want the best for themselves, so help them look to the present and the future in a positive way.

Find things for the kids to do. Encourage positive friend, peer, and skill-building activities. Kids may find personal strengths that outweigh their challenges. If a child has successes, he is no longer defined solely by his failures.

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# 5: it's expensive

## The Cost of Raising a Child Today

The recent cost estimate for raising a child from infancy to age 17 is $100,000. If you're parenting your grandchildren, you are likely supporting them too. Adult children who give up their children usually do not give grandparents any money to help raise the kids.

The cost of raising children is a serious financial challenge. It's important to make and keep a budget, especially if you're living on a fixed income. But if there simply isn't enough money there, grandparents raising grandchildren must find support from other sources. The process of applying for public and private assistance can be frustrating, lengthy, and confusing. If you follow the suggestions outlined in this chapter, you should have less trouble getting financial help.

## Public and Private Financial Assistance

There is aid available for grandparents parenting grandchildren. Yet many grandparents receive no aid because they do not apply. Grandparents may not know that benefits are available, and when they do know, they are often ashamed or embarrassed to apply for them. Getting assistance might simply be the right thing to do.

All states have some form of temporary cash assistance. However, eligibility for assistance is defined differently by each state.

## How to Apply for Benefits

The first step is to call your state or county **Department of Health and Welfare** or **Human Resources Office**. You should be able to find the number in your phone book under state government offices. You must visit the office to fill out an application for benefits. While there, you will be assigned a caseworker who will explain the benefits for which you are eligible.

The application process takes time, and your completed application takes about 45 days to process. It's hard, and often just seems silly, to document facts that we take for granted (like proving our relationship to our grandchildren), but documented proof is needed for those basic truths to be recognized under the law. Even if you do not have all the documents needed, it is very important to apply for benefits as soon as possible: Benefits are backdated to the date of your application.

***To apply for benefits, you will need the following documents:***

- **Proof of your grandchild's age and identity** means presenting the grandchild's birth certificate, adult child's birth certificate, and your driver's license. Provide a link showing you are related, like marriage licenses and divorce decrees showing you and your adult children's name changes through marriage and divorce.

- **Proof of your grandchild's residence** includes your driver's license and a power bill addressed to you. You might also need to sign a sworn statement that the child lives with you.

- **Presenting the card itself or just the grandchild's number, which will be verified, can prove your grandchild's Social Security number.**

- **Proof of your grandchild's citizenship or immigration status** means presenting the child's birth certificate. You may also need to sign a sworn statement that the child is a citizen.

- **Proof of your relationship to the child** includes birth certificates: yours, your adult child's, and the grandchild's. If your name has changed through marriage and divorce, provide the divorce decree(s) and/or marriage licenses that show a link to your grandchild by last name.

- **Proof of grandparents' resources** includes providing current bank statements, and reporting ownership of all vehicles and a ballpark figure of their value, whether licensed or not. Also report all property (land, rentals, etc.) that you own.

- **Proof of your grandchild's income** means presenting the child's Social Security income award letter, child support court order, the child's parent's divorce decree, or a similar court document that demonstrates what money and assets a child has. You also will need to provide records of your grandchild's trust funds and/or savings accounts.

Because your grandchild cannot qualify separately for some types of benefits, such as food stamps, you will also need *proof of the following:*

- **Your own identity** can be proven by presenting a driver's license or other picture ID, or two pieces of ID with no picture (your birth certificate and marriage license, for example).

- **Your residence** can be proven by presenting a power bill or other utility bill addressed to you at your residence, or by presenting mortgage papers.

- **Your household income** can be proven by presenting some or all of the following: 30 days worth of check stubs, a SocialSsecurity award letter, monthly dividends from an interest bearing bank account, a work verification form (available from your Welfare Office), and documents proving any other source of income.

- **Your expenses**, such as rent, utilities, and medical costs, can be demonstrated by presenting several months worth of household bills.

If benefits are denied, a fair hearing can be requested. First and most importantly though, you must apply. Begin the process as soon as possible. Benefits can only be backdated to the date of application.

*NOTE: The legal status of your relationship to your grandchildren may influence the benefits you can apply for. Know your legal status when seeking financial benefits. The Legal Issues chapter (page 41) lists and explains the legal status you may have, and some of the rights you have under that status.*

## Where Else Can I Look for Support?

**Supplemental Security Income** (SSI)

*Who qualifies?*

A child can qualify if he or she has a physical or mental challenge that is as severe as one that would prevent an adult from working. A child is also eligible if he or she has a condition that keeps the child from doing things and behaving in ways that are normal for children the same age.

*Benefits*

SSI provides monthly Social Security payments. Apply at your local Social Security Office. This is a need-based program. You must bring the same documents that are listed earlier when you apply.

**Social Security Survivors Benefits**

*Who qualifies?*

Children under age 18 whose parents have died.

*Benefits*

Monthly insurance payments will be made to your grandchild from SSI. Apply at you local Social Security Office as soon as possible. Benefits may not be payable back to the time of the parent's death.

***Some Helpful Hints for Getting Government Aid***

1. Get applications for all available aid.
2. Talk to a legal aid assistance person or a legal expert.
3. Get things in writing.
4. Keep receipts.
5. Have original documents, if possible.
6. Keep all medical records.
7. Keep the social services office informed of any changes.
8. Use referral lines and support groups.
9. Remember that not all states award the same benefits.

**Medicaid**

*Who qualifies?*

People with low income and limited assets.

*Benefits*

Free medical services are provided for those who qualify.

**The Early Periodic Screening, Diagnosis, and Treatment (EPSDT)**

*Who qualifies?*

Children in families that can demonstrate financial need.

*Benefits*

EPSDT provides needy children with preventative health care by detecting and treating early signs of disease or disability. It also assists children by connecting them with ongoing, comprehensive medical assistance.

**Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC)**

*Who qualifies?*

1. Grandparents whose grandchild is either under age 19—or under 24 and a full-time student—or who is totally disabled, and who has

lived in their home for more than 6 months of the tax year are eligible.

2. Grandparents who have worked during the tax year are also eligible.

*Benefits*

EITC benefits are based on a percentage of your earned income. If you owe taxes, they will be deducted from the amount. If you do not owe, you will receive a check for the amount of the credit. Your local IRS office can provide you with forms and instructions for application, but grandparents cannot apply if the parents apply.

**Special Supplemental Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC)**

*Who qualifies?*

Grandparents must prove that their grandchild under the age of 5 is nutritionally needy, and must also demonstrate financial need.

*Benefits*

WIC provides a monthly food coupon packet designed to improve the nutritional quality of the child's diet.

*NOTE: WIC is not an entitlement program and therefore not automatically available to all who qualify. If you are found eligible for food stamps, or Medicaid, you meet the financial eligibility requirement for WIC.*

**Head Start**

*Who qualifies?*

Children between the ages of 3 and 5 with proven need.

*Benefits*

Head Start provides child development services, including education, emotional development, physical and mental health care, and nutrition.

*NOTE: Most spaces in Head Start are reserved for 4-year-olds, and demand is high. You may need to have legal custody of your grandchild to apply for this program.*

**Income Tax Advantages**

*Who qualifies?*

Grandparents who can prove they provided at least 50 percent of the support for their grandchildren during the tax year.

*Benefits*

You can claim your grandchild as a dependent. Keep good records of the costs of caring for your grandchildren.

*NOTE: Applying for public and private assistance can be a time consuming and frustrating task. Be persistent! The rewards are worth the effort.*

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# 6: legal issues

## What Are My Legal Rights?

Until you have established your legal relationship to your grandhildren in court, that relationship is not legally recognized. Grandparents who have not gone to court to win a legal relationship with their grandchild are not authorized to make decisions about the grandchild; that right rests with the parent.

When parents and grandparents agree to a custodial arrangement, the process of getting legal guardianship of the grandchildren is not difficult. Although the arrangement must be approved by the court, approval usually is easily obtained if it is clear that the arrangement is in the best interest of the child.

Grandparents must be legally declared guardians of the grandchildren if they wish to seek a custodial relationship with them. The terms of that relationship will be determined by the facts of the individual case.

If a legal relationship has not been established, you may not be able to register your grandchild in school, include the child on your insurance policy, give consent for medical care, apply for benefits on the child's behalf or make any other decisions about your grandchild's life. You need to establish a legal relationship with your grandchild if you want the rights that usually go along with the responsibilities of parenting.

## What Is a Legal Relationship?

A legal relationship with a grandchild is one that gives the grandparent some legal authority to make decisions on the child's behalf.

Some states are willing to recognize an informal relationship when grandparents parent their grandchildren. This relationship is called *informal guardianship*. While informal guardianship recognizes established physical custody, it gives grandparents no legal authority to make decisions for their grandchildren. That right is granted only after grandparents apply to the courts and are awarded *legal guardianship* of the grandchildren. Once legal guardianship is established, grandparents may begin the process of defining the terms and extent of *legal custody* options open to them.

Many states have strict guardianship and custody requirements. The scope of guardianship or custody will be determined by the facts of the individual case. What kind of legal relationship is best for you will be established according to the guidelines of your state and the needs of your grandkids as they are determined by the court. There are, fortunately, some broad categories that are the same all over the nation.

The basic legal relationships possible include:

**Guardianship**

*Informal guardianship* is the place grandparents caring for grandkids start at before going to court, with responsibility for the grandchildren but no rights to help us care for them. Informal guardianship is not a legal relationship. It is the term used for grandparents who care for their grandkids full or part-time, but do not have legal custody.

*Legal guardianship,* awarded by the court, gives grandparents the legal right to make limited decisions for their grandchildren. Legal guardianship does not take away the rights of the parents, but "puts them on hold." This legal relationship does not allow you to make decisions about the child's religion and it does not allow you to move the child out of state, but does give you authority to make daily decisions on the child's behalf and to apply for aid. In order to establish the terms and extent of a custodial relationship, a grandparent must first be awarded guardianship.

*Temporary guardianship* is an award of custody for a limited period of time. Special forms of guardianship include **standby** and **short-term** guard-

***The Kinship Care Act***

As a result of the federal Kinship Care Act of 1995, family members are now the "preferred placement option" for child custody. If you are caring for children because the court has placed them with you, you have more legal protection than you would if you had taken the child into your home without court intervention. Under the Kinship Care Act, you have physical custody and the state retains legal custody. You must abide by the state's decisions. You may be subject to background checks and home inspections. Unfortunately, even though you are providing your grandchild with foster care, in many states you are not eligible for the same financial assistance that licensed foster caregivers receive.

*NOTE: The Kinship Care Act applies only to children removed from their parent's home for their protection. Some states now use a Best Interest of the Child test to determine placement, and do not automatically place the children with relatives.*

ianship, for use when the parent is in jail or rehab for a pre-determined length of time.

**Custody**

*Physical custody* and *legal custody* are usually distinctively different, though some states combine them. *Physical custody* means taking on the responsibility of caring for the child, but with no legal right to make decisions on their behalf. *Legal custody* gives you the right to make decisions on your grandchild's behalf. (Court-appointed legal custody is discussed under the Kinship Care Act.)

*Shared custody* is a legal arrangement wherein grandparents and parents share the care of the grandchildren. All legal custody arrangements give you the right to make decisions on your grandchild's behalf, but those rights vary from case-to-case, and from state-to-state. You must apply for legal custody in order for it to be granted by the court.

*Physical custody for the children's own protection* is awarded when grandchildren are removed from their home and their parents by the court, for their own protection.

*Adoption* is the legal relationship that gives you all the rights and responsibilities of a parent, and permanently breaks the legal ties of your adult children with the grandchildren.

Whether you are caring for your grandkids temporarily or long-term, it is important to get a legal relationship established if you want any legal authority to make decisions on their behalf. Call a Legal Aid Office for help. Attend all hearings. Keep documents organized. Stay informed and ask questions, and play by the rules of the court.

If you are involved in an emotional legal battle with your own children to win custory of your grandchildren, it is important to show the court that you are reasonable and calm. Your behavior can set the tone for the case and may influence the outcome.

## Document, Document, Document, To Win Custody

Most parents and grandparents can work out a mutually acceptable custordial arrangement without a legal battle for custody. After the details are worked through, it is still necessary to apply to the court in order to establish a legal relationship with the grandchildren. If both grandparents and parents are in agreement about the arrangement, the process to establish legal custory is not difficult.

It is essential that grandparents seeking legal guardianship or custody present detailed and accurate facts. (This is particularly important for those seeking custody against the wishes of their own children). Written accounts of events, taken down immediately after they occur, are much more accurate than emotional testimonials after the fact. For example, from memory you might say, "Jim came to the door one night last month, drunk and swearing." If you write down an account of the event, it might read, "On July 11, 1998, my adult child, the parent of my grandchildren, Jim Smith, knocked loudly on my door at 2:30 a.m. unannounced. He was intoxicated, staggering, and talked

with a slurred speech. He swore loudly, using extremely offensive language."

Careful documentation of details makes an impression in a court of law. If you foresee a legal battle for custody of your grandchildren, keep a written record of your adult child's behavior. Documentation may involve keeping a journal, a diary, or a calendar. Don't use loose notes; these get lost and out of order. In a bound book, the sequence of events cannot be faked.

Do not write down your feelings about events. Write down only what happended. Include the time, the date, the nature of the event (phone call, visit, birthday experience, a trip), and the reaction of the grandchildren before and after the event. Account for what the parent does and does not do.

It is also helpful to keep all of your financial records in order, including the amount you have spent in support of your grandchildren, and what services or items were purchased. Write down everything. When legal issues come to a head, you may not win, but without good documentation and specific records, you will surely lose.

## Sources for More Information—Legal Issues

"Bill Would Give Grandparents First Opportunity to Raise Grandchildren." *Aging News Alert.* October, 1995.

*Grandparents as Parents: Series of Twelve Bulletins.* University of Kentucky, College of Agriculture, Cooperative Extension. 1997.

Jendrek, M.P. "Policy Concerns of White Grandparents Who Provide Regular Care to Their Grandchildren." *Journal of Gerontological Social Work* 23 (1/2). 1994.

Wagner, D. *Grandparents Crusade: Universal Coverage for All Children.* National Council on Aging, National Pre-White House Conference on Aging 7 (1/2). 1995.

*Year of the Grandparent Proclamation.* Washington, DC. Public Law 103-368. January, 1995.

# 7: making a choice

## Saying "No" to Parenting Again

You may decide to say "no" to second time parenting for health, financial, or personal reasons. But you should also say "no" if you cannot make the grandchildren feel wanted or loved.

Parenting requires great patience and skill. But even patient, skillful grandparents will fail their grandchildren unless they can bring some joy, love, and hope to the job of parenting. Joy, love, and optimism alone will not make you a successful parent, but without them, there is little chance of raising a healthy, productive person.

Parents and grandparents foster hope when it is evident in their own lives. Optimists fare better in the classroom, at work, and at home, because they persist in the face of setbacks. If you cannot parent your grandchildren with love and joy, and nurture a sense of hope in them, you should try to help find a family who can.

## Saying "Yes" to Parenting Again

*"The rewards of self-satisfaction, doing the right thing, making a difference, leaving the world a better place, and the laughter, make it all worthwhile."*

The Peace Corps has been called the hardest job you'll ever love, but parenting also fits the bill. Nothing binds us to each other like working together toward a common goal. When the goal is to be a family, full of

creative, productive human beings, it takes work. A family is "working" when there is joy to be found in it, among the tangle of a thousand other elements.

As a good parent, you try to keep life orderly, but sometimes, you just have to embrace the chaos. A parent has to accept, and even celebrate, the messy, unorganized, spontaneity of a family, where many lives bump up against each other, and stuff happens.

You may have made some mistakes when you raised your own kids. As you parent again, try to step back and look at the mistakes you make, and do not allow them to become a pattern.

It takes a lot of work, every day, to be a patient, kind, skillful, communicative, active, optimistic parent for your grandchildren. All parents make mistakes. Good parents learn from them. There are no perfect parents, but thoughtful, joyful, committed parents are truly grand parents.

## Sources for More Information—Making a Choice

Ayya, N. "Skip-Generation Parenting: Grandparents Under Stress." *Aging Today* 8. January/February, 1995.

Bowman, B. "Grandparent to Grandparent Forums: Strengthening Ties Among the Generations." *Zero to Three* 16(4). February/March, 1996.

Bowman, S. *Non-Traditional Families: A Guide for Parents.* Oregon State University Extension Service. EC 1412. October, 1992.

Creighton, L.L. "Silent Saviors." *U.S. News & World Report.* December, 1991.

Gregerson, D. *Ties That Bind: Grandparenting Today.* Oregon State University Extension Service. EC1459. 1996.

Jendrek, M.P. "Grandparents Who Parent Their Grandchildren: Circumstances and Decisions." *The Gerontologist* 34(2). 1994.

Murphy, L.B., & C.T. Small "A Century of Grandmothers." *Zero to Three* 16(4). 1996.

Weissbourd, B. "There Will Always Be Lullabies: Enduring Connections Between Grandparents and Young Children." *Zero to Three* 16(4). February/March 1996.

Young, B. "Grandparents Give in Many Ways." *Zero to Three* 16(4). February/March, 1996.

# 8: where to find help

## Agencies & Organizations

**AARP Grandparent Information Center**
AARP Headquarters
601 E Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20049
202-434-2296
Weekdays, 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. EST

**American Bar Association**
750 N. Lake Shore
Chicago, IL 60611
312-988-5000

**The American Self-Help Clearinghouse**
St. Charles-Riverside Medical Center
Denville, NJ 07834
201-627-7101

**Foundation for Grandparenting**
Box 31
Lake Placid, NY 12946

**Grandparents Against Immorality and Neglect (GAIN)**
720 Kingstown Pl.
Shreveport, LA 71108
318-688-4246

**Grandparents As Parents (GAP)**
Box 964
Lakewood, CA 90716
310-924-3996
Fax: 714-828-1375

**Grandparents Information Center**
Washington, DC
202-434-2296

**Grandparents United for Children's Rights**
137 Larkin St.
Madison, WI 53705
608-238-8571

**Legal Services for Prisoners with Children**
474 Valencia St., Suite 230
San Francisco, CA 94103
415-255-7036

**National Association for Perinatal Addiction Research and Education (NAPARE)**
200 N. Michigan Ave., Suite 300
Chicago, IL 60601

**National Association for Protection and Advocacy Systems**
900 Second St., NE, Suite 211
Washington, DC 20002
202-408-9513

**National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information**
11426-28 Rockville Pike
Rockville, MD 20852
800-729-6686

**National Coalition of Grandparents**
Contact Person: Ethel Dunn
Madison, WI 53705
608-238-8751
Fax: 608-238-8751

**National Information Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities** (NICHCY)
Box 1492
Washington, DC 20013

**National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA)**
1700 Research Blvd.
Rockville, MD 20850
800-729-6686

**National PTA Drug and Alcohol Abuse Prevention Project**
330 N. Wabash Ave., Suite 2100
Chicago, IL 60611-3690
312-670-6872

**Open Arms Family Support Network**
Box 50982
Pasadena, CA 91115-0982
818-383-6800

**R.O.C.K.I.N.G./Raising Our Children's Kids: An International Network of Grandparents, Inc.**
Contact person: Mary Fron
PO Box 96
Niles, MI 49120
616-683-9038

## Information Sources

**AARP Pamphlets**
AARP Headquarters
601 E Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20049

*Raising Healthy Grandchildren*
*Untangling the Web*

**The Grandparenting Series**
Sage Publications, Inc.
2455 Teller Road
Newbury Park, CA 91320-2218
805-499-0721

**Oregon State University Extension Service Publications**
Administrative Services, A422
Corvallis, OR 97331-2119
541-737-2513

Jan Hare. *Sharing the Responsibilities of Parent Care: Sibling Relationships in Later Life.* EC 1458. 1996.
Jan Hare. *Long-Lasting Marriages: Why Do They Survive?* EC 1460. 1996.

## Internet Resources

**Administration for Children and Families (ACF)**
http://www.acf.dhhs.gov/

**America Goes Back To School**
http://www.ed.gov/Family/agbts

**Child Care Aware**
http://www.target.dhc.com/TargetWWW/html/child01.htm

**Child Care Bureau**
http://www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/ccb/index.html

**Child Care Parent Provider Information Network (CCPPIN)**
http://www.childcare-ppin.com

**Child Quest International**
http://www.childquest.org/

**Child Welfare League of America (CWLA)**
http://www.cwla.org

**Children Now**
http://www.childrennow.org

**Children, Youth, and Families At Risk**
http://www.reeusda.gov/4h/cyfar/cyfar.htm

**Children, Youth and Family Consortium**
http://www.cyfc.umn.edu

**Children, Youth, and Families Education and Research Network (CYFERNet)**
http://www.cyfernet.org/

**Children's Defense Fund**
http://www.childrensdefense.org/

**Clearinghouse on Elementary and Early Childhood Education (ERIC/EECE)**
http://ericps.crc.uiuc.edu/ericeece.html

**Daycare Provider's Beginner Page**
http://www.oursite.net/daycare/home.htm

**Early Childhood Education Linkage System**
http://www.paaap.org/eccls/

**Family**
http://family.com

**HandsNet**
http://www.handsnet.org/

**Join Together Online**
http://www.jointogether.org

**National Assoc. of Child Care Professionals (NACCP)**
http://www.naccp.org

**National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)**
http://www.naeyc.org/naeyc

**National Association for Family Child Care**
http://www.assoc-mgmt.com/users/nafcc

**National Child Care Information Center (NCCIC)**
http://ericps.crc.uiuc.edu/nccic/nccichome.html

**National Coalition for Campus Children's Centers**
http://ericps.crc.uiuc.edu/n4c/n4chome.html

**National Decisions for Health Network**
NNH@eet.s.extension.umn.edu

**National Early Childhood Technical Assistance System (NEC*TAS)**
http://www.nectas.unc.edu/

**National Head Start Association (NHSA)**
http://nhsa.org/

**The National Institute on Out-of-School Time**
http://www.wellesley.edu/WCW/CRW/SAC

**National Network for Child Care**
http://www.nncc.org/

**National Resource Center for Health and Safety in Child Care**
http://nrc.uchsc.edu/

**NNFR Intergenerational Issues SIG/listserv**
NNFRS6@cets.extension.umn.edu

**Zero To Three: National Center for Infants, Toddlers and Families**
http://www.zerotothree.org

For **grandparents** acting as parents,

Doris Williams gives easy-to-use, informative, and realistic assistance in raising their grandchildren, covering concerns such as:

- Finances
- Legalities
- Their ability to parent again
- Family relationships
- Helpful contacts

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*Grandparents: Raising Our Children's Children* is an authoritative but accessible handbook for both grandparents and the professionals who advise them.

**"Kudos to you. You have aided in our understanding of what it means to be simultaneously a parent and a grandparent."**

Ethel Dunn, Executive Director, Grandparents United

**"Knowing how children and adolescents see things and feel about their environment is essential for grandparents who are responsible for bringing up grandchildren."**

Robert Strom, Distinguished Research Professor, Arizona State University

Doris Williams is a retired Professor and Extension Human Development Specialist at the Margaret Ritchie School of Family and Consumer Sciences at the University of Idaho. She is on the editorial board of Adult Residential Care Journal and a consultant for the Agency for Children, Youth, and Families. She herself is a grandparent in Moscow, Idaho.

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63